

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	A Qualitative Evidence Synthesis on the Management of Male Obesity
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Archibald, Daryll; Douglas, Flora; Hoddinott, Pat; van Teijlingen, Edwin; Stewart, Fiona; Robertson, Clare; Boyers, Dwayne; Avenell, Alison

### VERSION 1 - REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Prof Alan White Centre for Men's Health Leeds Beckett University Leeds England
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	14-May-2015

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This is an important paper based on a very influential study into men and weight loss interventions.</p> <p>It would be beneficial to the paper to revise their statement that hegemonic masculinity is the 'culturally normative ideal' (p 13). The team have briefly defined hegemonic masculinity and in so doing have lost sight that it is not an ideal and quite damaging for many.</p> <p>Just to note - there were a number of occasions where there was a space missing between words on my PDF.</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	<p>Dr Amy Ahern MRC Human Nutrition Research</p> <p>I have received funding to my institution from Weight Watchers International to support the conduct of an NPRI-funded trial of primary care referral to a commercial weight loss programme (ISRCTN82857232).</p>
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	18-May-2015

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This paper reports the findings of an important review into male perceptions and experiences of weight loss programmes (WLPs). Men are under-represented in trials of WLPs and in real world interventions in general practice and the community, and male views on their experiences are rarely sought. As a companion to the quantitative ROMEO review, that examined the effectiveness of weight loss interventions for men, this review synthesises qualitative literature on male experiences in order to inform the provision of weight management services for men.</p> <p>The paper is well written and provides useful (and much needed)</p>
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	<p>insights into male experiences of weight management. However, I would recommend a number of revisions to the current manuscript before it is suitable for publication.</p> <p>1) The objective of the paper is defined on P4 (L24) as understanding factors that were 1) important of instrumental in encouraging men to engage in a WLP, 2) evident in men's perspectives and experience of WLPs once engaged, and 3) contained perspectives of the impacts and consequences of engagement in WLPs. These are distinct stages in the weight loss journey, as detailed in Figure 1. However, in places the results of this review mix up different stages, and findings could be more meaningful to those trying to understand where/when/how to intervene if some elements are rearranged to more closely reflect the schematic in Figure 1. E.g</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 1 on "Engagement" appears to mix together issues of motivation to participate in the intervention, with the influence of family and friends in sticking to a diet. Should the latter not be part of the experience of participating in an intervention?</li> <li>• The section on men and diets is included in the section that is predominantly about experience of the intervention (section 2), but most of the papers cited here do not reflect experience of being on a diet or participating in a WLP, but rather attitudes towards dieting from men who may or may not have tried a WLP. [The one cited study that does relate to experience of an intervention (Gallagher, 2012, Ref30), presents no data to suggest what men specifically think about diets and I am unsure where the message regarding "one size fits all" comes from. Can the authors please review whether this the correct reference/whether this is a correct interpretation of that reference?]</li> </ul> <p>2) Bottom of P22 suggests men only want to lose weight if they are obese and that the ideal body weight for men is overweight. Were there really no studies included in this review that refute this/ include perspectives of men who are overweight and want to lose weight?</p> <p>3) The review would benefit from more clarity and consistency in the presentation of findings relating to masculinity/male only programmes. Much is made of some men preferring male only groups and masculinised interventions. The perceived femininity of weight loss dieting and the perception of weight loss programmes as female spaces is no doubt a barrier to some men participating in weight loss interventions, but it is important to clarify whether this is a majority or minority view, and whether this is also the view of men who have participated in the intervention.</p> <p>On P17 L34. The authors make an important point that "other studies concluded that male-only features were less important to most men". This is a potentially important conclusion that suggests the majority of men do not need this focus on masculinity. However, this is overlooked in favour of the prevailing discourse that men need something different/masculine. Could this counterpoint be substantiated by reference to the studies that support this conclusion, and potentially a quote? And could this be explored further in the discussion?</p> <p>P21 L34 – the need for masculinity in interventions is again discussed. However, this is found in 2 studies, and is "unsupported by participant quotes". Is there evidence from other studies that this is not necessary? Should this be included here?</p> <p>4) On page 6, the authors describe how they rated the quality of the</p>
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	<p>included studies. This appears to have been a comprehensive undertaking, however, there is then no further consideration of the quality of these studies in the review. While I agree that they are correct not to discard studies on the basis of how the reported articles meet checklist criteria, I believe a more critical appraisal of the studies included in the review would be beneficial to the reader. Could supplementary material on the quality of the studies be provided? Or could this be incorporated into the paper?</p> <p>5) It is interesting that many of the weight loss intervention components identified as being important for men are similar to those valued by women and shown to be effective in both genders: goal setting, self-monitoring of diet and physical activity, accountability, peer support. Likewise the motivating factors of the 'obesity' label and health concerns, and the variable impact of friends and families are also seen in both genders. The authors might consider whether this is worthy of mention in the discussion. In particular, this might suggest that the focus might be less on developing new interventions, and more on making existing interventions more appealing to those men who are not attracted to traditional interventions. The authors should also edit the paper carefully throughout to be clear where there is actually evidence of differences between male and female perspectives and where this is simply an interpretation made by the authors of the original study.</p> <p>6) Some parts of the discussion are not supported by the evidence presented in the results.  No evidence is presented in the review to support the assertion that community interventions, particularly those associated with football, rugby clubs, or workplace settings, were preferable to interventions in hospital or health care settings.  No evidence is presented in the review to support the assertion that physical activity has more appeal for men than women.  P24 L49 The statement that "obesity can be conceptualised as a predominantly female issue around image, a viewpoint perhaps reinforced by the greater attendance of women at weight loss clubs" is unsupported. The evidence in the review suggests that obesity (as opposed to overweight) is a big motivator for men to lose weight because it is associated with ill health (as it is in women). I also do not follow how the attendance rates of women at weight loss clubs is informative about the motivation of these women.</p> <p>7) In the conclusion the authors state "our research shows that there is a need to focus on male-sensitive approaches to weight loss." Can they be a bit more specific about what they mean/what their data show?</p> <p>Minor points  P22 Line 39. States the data is from focus groups with female partners of men participating in the programme, but the quote is from a man.  P3 L32 Typo - Different ideas exist about why this may be 'the' case  P18 L14 Typo - 'illustrated' should not be in superscript.  Please add references to the tables (i.e a number linking each study entry to the full reference at the end of the paper) to make it easier for the reader.  Could the table also include the gender of participants in the studies (i.e N men and N women, N men) so the reader can see which studies included comparison of experiences.</p>
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## VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

### Responses to Reviewer1:

The reference to hegemonic masculinity as a culturally normative ideal has been removed. See changes highlighted in red on page 21 directly under the heading 'Influence of partners, family and friends on men's engagement with a WLP'

The manuscript has also been checked for missing spaces and now seems fine.

### Responses to Reviewer 2:

1. An amendment has been made to reflect the concern regarding the section on the influence of family and friends in section 1. The passage has been moved to section 2 on 'Perspectives and experiences of weight management programmes'. It can now be found on page 21 highlighted in blue.

The concern pertaining to the section on men and diets has been reviewed and amended. See 'Men and diets' section on page 20 highlighted in red. The reference to the Gallagher et al. study has been removed and replaced with data from other included studies that provide what we believe is a better insight into male perceptions of dieting during a WLP.

2. The concern regarding the suggestion that men only want to lose weight if they are obese and that the ideal body weight for men is overweight has been reviewed and amended. There was one example of a participant in an included study (White et al. 2008) who was overweight and wanted to lose weight. This has been added to the manuscript. See paragraph on 'The downside of losing weight for men' highlighted in red on page 25.

3. The reviewer's concerns around the perceived lack of clarity regarding majority/minority views around aspects such as male-only groups have been reviewed and given significant attention. However, as this is a qualitative evidence synthesis, we feel it is important not to draw conclusions about "majorities and minorities" (which are quantitative terms) when the data has not been reported and the qualitative samples are small. However, an amendment has been made to the last paragraph on page 17 (highlighted in red) to emphasise the lack of clarity in the data regarding the proportions of men who preferred male only groups. The discussion on page 26 (second paragraph, highlighted in red) has also been amended to reflect this point.

In addition we have added data from a study to the last paragraph of the section on 'Alcohol and obesity' (page 22, highlighted in red) to reflect the fact that the authors stated that most of their participants welcomed a de-emphasis on strict dieting.

The reviewer's concerns regarding P.17 L34 of the initial draft ("other studies concluded that male-only features were less important to most men") has been reviewed and amended (See foot of page 17 and second paragraph of the discussion on page 26, both highlighted red). Additional data from included studies have been added to provide a more balanced account. This demonstrates that men in another included study were seemingly divided over whether or not a male-only WLP was an important motivator. Thus, the contention that "male-only features were less important to most men" has been removed as on reflection it appears that views are mixed on this aspect of interventions.

The reviewer's point regarding whether a point made regarding the need for masculinity in interventions on P21 L34 of the initially submitted manuscript has been reviewed. We have reconsidered this point and it has now been deleted.

4. In regards to the reviewer's point pertaining to the quality assessment, we state in the text that the

full quality assessment is available in our Health Technology Assessment, and a link to this is provided in the references. However we unfortunately cannot provide this as a supplementary file due to copyright restrictions.

5. The discussion has been amended to acknowledge that the factors listed by the reviewer may also be just as effective for women as they are for men (page 26 highlighted red). However, the review aimed to answer questions about aspects of WLPs that work for men only and thus didn't focus on aspects that may be similarly effective for women.

In regards to the reviewer's point on editing the paper carefully to be clear where there is actually evidence of differences between male and female perspectives and where this is simply an interpretation made by the authors of the original study, an amendment has been made to the manuscript on page 22. Under the "Men and physical activity" heading a sentence has been amended to make clear that the contention that men may view physical activity in different ways to women is an author interpretation (highlighted in red).

6. An amendment has been made regarding the reviewer's concerns regarding the lack of evidence in the review to support the assertion that community interventions, particularly those associated with football, rugby clubs, or workplace settings, were preferable to interventions in hospital or health care settings. A section on "The importance of location and setting as a 'hook' to engage men" has been added on page 18 (highlighted in red) to provide evidence that supports the assertion that community interventions, particularly those associated with football, rugby clubs, or workplace settings, were preferable to interventions in hospital or health care settings.

An amendment has been made regarding the reviewer's concern around a lack of evidence to support the assertion that physical activity has more appeal for men than women. This was a finding from the quantitative evidence in the ROMEO review but was not supported by the qualitative evidence. This has now been deleted.

An amendment has been made concerning the reviewer's point around the unsupported statement that "obesity can be conceptualised as a predominantly female issue around image, a viewpoint perhaps reinforced by the greater attendance of women at weight loss clubs". The statement has been removed and a new statement regarding the issue around obesity rather than overweight being a key motivator for joining a WLP has been added. See foot of page 27, second paragraph of the section titled 'Implications for clinicians and policy makers' (highlighted red).

7. Further specific details have been added to the conclusion on page 28 (highlighted red) to support the assertion that "our research shows that there is a need to focus on male-sensitive approaches to weight loss."

Each of the minor points highlighted by the reviewer has been addressed in the manuscript)

## VERSION 2 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Amy Ahern MRC Human Nutrition Research, Cambridge, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	03-Aug-2015

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	I am happy with the authors' responses to the requested revisions and feel that this is an interesting and worthwhile paper that will be of interest to the journal's readership
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